# Ramayana:  Summary

The *Ramayana* is one of the two great Indian epics,the other being the Mahabharata. The *Ramayana* tells about life in India around 1000 BCE and offers models in dharma. The hero, Rama, lived his whole life by the rules of dharma; in fact, that was why Indian consider him heroic. When Rama was a young boy, he was the perfect son. Later he was an ideal husband to his faithful wife, Sita, and a responsible ruler of Aydohya. "Be as Rama," young Indians have been taught for 2,000 years; "Be as Sita."

The original *Ramayana* was a 24,000 couplet-long epic poem attributed to the Sanskrit poet Valmiki. Oral versions of Rama's story circulated for centuries, and the epic was probably first written down sometime around the start of the Common Era. It has since been told, retold, translated and transcreated throughout South and Southeast Asia, and the *Ramayana* continues to be performed in dance, drama, puppet shows, songs and movies all across Asia.

From childhood most Indians learn the characters and incidents of these epics and they furnish the ideals and wisdom of common life. The epics help to bind together the many peoples of India, transcending caste, distance and language. Two all-Indian holidays celebrate events in the Ramayana. Dussehra, a fourteen-day festival in October, commemorates the siege of Lanka and Rama's victory over Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. Divali, the October-November festival of Lights, celebrates Rama and Sita's return home to their kingdom of Ayodhya

Prince Rama was the eldest of four sons and was to become king when his father retired from ruling. His stepmother, however, wanted to see her son Bharata, Rama's younger brother, become king. Remembering that the king had once promised to grant her any two wishes she desired, she demanded that Rama be banished and Bharata be crowned. The king had to keep his word to his wife and ordered Rama's banishment. Rama accepted the decree unquestioningly. "I gladly obey father's command," he said to his stepmother. "Why, I would go even if you ordered it."

When Sita, Rama's wife, heard Rama was to be banished, she begged to accompany him to his forest retreat. "As shadow to substance, so wife to husband," she reminded Rama. "Is not the wife's dharma to be at her husband's side? Let me walk ahead of you so that I may smooth the path for your feet," she pleaded. Rama agreed, and Rama, Sita and his brother Lakshmana all went to the forest.

When Bharata learned what his mother had done, he sought Rama in the forest. "The eldest must rule," he reminded Rama. "Please come back and claim your rightful place as king." Rama refused to go against his father's command, so Bharata took his brother's sandals and said, "I shall place these sandals on the throne as symbols of your authority. I shall rule only as regent in your place, and each day I shall put my offerings at the feet of my Lord. When the fourteen years of banishment are over, I shall joyously return the kingdom to you." Rama was very impressed with Bharata's selflessness. As Bharata left, Rama said to him, "I should have known that you would renounce gladly what most men work lifetimes to learn to give up."

Later in the story, Ravana, the evil King of Lanka, (what is probably present-day Sri Lanka) abducted Sita. Rama mustered the aid of a money army, built a causeway across to Lanka, released Sita and brought her safely back to Aydohya. In order to set a good example, however, Rama demanded that Sita prove her purity before he could take her back as his wife. Rama, Sita and Bharata are all examples of persons following their dharma.   
  
This lesson focuses on how the Ramayana teaches Indians to perform their dharma. Encourage students to pick out examples of characters in the epic who were faithful to their dharma and those who violated their dharma. Mahatma Gandhi dreamed that one day modern India would become a Ram-rajya.

Main Characters of the Ramayana

**Dasaratha --** King of Ayodhya (capital of Kosala), whose eldest son was Rama. Dasaratha had three wives and four sons -- Rama, Bharata, and the twins Lakshmana and Satrughna.

**Rama --** Dasaratha's first-born son, and the upholder of Dharma (correct conduct and duty). Rama, along with his wife Sita, have served as role models for thousands of generations in India and elsewhere. Rama is regarded by many Hindus as an incarnation of the god Vishnu.

**Sita --** Rama's wife, the adopted daughter of King Janak. Sita was found in the furrows of a sacred field, and was regarded by the people of Janak's kingdom as a blessed child.

**Bharata --** Rama's brother by Queen Kaikeyi. When Bharata learned of his mother's scheme to banish Rama and place him on the throne, he put Rama's sandals on the throne and ruled Ayodhya in his name.

**Hanuman --** A leader of the monkey tribe allied with Rama against Ravana. Hanuman has many magical powers because his father was the god of the wind. Hanuman's devotion to Rama, and his supernatural feats in the battle to recapture Sita, has made him one of the most popular characters in the Ramayana.

**Ravana --** The 10-headed king of Lanka who abducted Sita.

**Kaushlaya --** Dasaratha's first wife, and the mother of Rama.

**Lakshmana --** Rama's younger brother by Dasaratha's third wife, Sumitra. When Rama and Sita were exiled to the forest, Lakshmana followed in order to serve.  
  
**Ramayana: A Summary**

1. Dasharatha, King of Aydohya, has three wives and four sons. Rama is the eldest. His mother is Kaushalya. Bharata is the son of his second and favorite wife, Queen Kaikeyi. The other two are twins, Lakshman and Shatrughna. Rama and Bharata are blue, perhaps indicating they were dark skinned or originally south Indian deities.

2) A sage takes the boys out to train them in archery. Rama has hit an apple hanging from a string.

3) In a neighboring city the ruler's daughter is named Sita. When it was time for Sita to choose her bridegroom, at a ceremony called a swayamvara, the princes were asked to string a giant bow. No one else can even lift the bow, but as Rama bends it, he not only strings it but breaks it in two. Sita indicates she has chosen Rama as her husband by putting a garland around his neck. The disappointed suitors watch.

4) King Dasharatha, Rama's father, decides it is time to give his throne to his eldest son Rama and retire to the forest to seek moksha. Everyone seems pleased. This plan fulfills the rules of dharma because an eldest son should rule and, if a son can take over one's responsibilities, one's last years may be spent in a search for moksha. In addition, everyone loves Rama. However Rama's step-mother, the king's second wife, is not pleased. She wants her son, Bharata, to rule. Because of an oath Dasharatha had made to her years before, she gets the king to agree to banish Rama for fourteen years and to crown Bharata, even though the king, on bended knee, begs her not to demand such things. Broken-hearted, the devastated king cannot face Rama with the news and Kaikeyi must tell him.

5) Rama, always obedient, is as content to go into banishment in the forest as to be crowned king. Sita convinces Rama that she belongs at his side and his brother Lakshman also begs to accompany them. Rama, Sita and Lakshman set out for the forest.

Bharata, whose mother's evil plot has won him the throne, is very upset when he finds out what has happened. Not for a moment does he consider breaking the rules of dharma and becoming king in Rama's place. He goes to Rama's forest retreat and begs Rama to return and rule, but Rama refuses. "We must obey father," Rama says. Bharata then takes Rama's sandals saying, "I will put these on the throne, and every day I shall place the fruits of my work at the feet on my Lord." Embracing Rama, he takes the sandals and returns to Aydohya.

6) Years pass and Rama, Sita and Lakshman are very happy in the forest. Rama and Lakshman destroy the rakshasas (evil creatures) who disturb the sages in their meditations. One day a rakshasa princess tries to seduce Rama, and Lakshmana wounds her and drives her away. She returns to her brother Ravana, the ten-headed ruler of Lanka (Sri Lanka, formerly Ceylon), and tells her brother (who has a weakness for beautiful women) about lovely Sita.

Ravana devises a plan to abduct Sita. He sends a magical golden deer which Sita desires. Rama and Lakshman go off to hunt the deer, first drawing a protective circle around Sita and warning her she will be safe as long as she does not step outside the circle. As they go off, Ravana (who can change his shape) appears as a holy man begging alms. The moment Sita steps outside the circle to give him food, Ravana grabs her and carries her off the his kingdom in Lanka.

7) Rama is broken-hearted when he returns to the empty hut and cannot find Sita. A band of monkeys offer to help him find Sita.   
Ravana has carried Sita to his palace in Lanka, but he cannot force her to be his wife so he puts her in a grove and alternately sweet-talks her and threatens her in an attempt to get her to agree to marry him. Sita will not even look at him but thinks only of her beloved Rama. Hanuman, the general of the monkey band can fly since his father is the wind, and Hanuman flies to Lanka and, finding Sita in the grove, comforts her and tells her Rama will soon come and save her.

8) Ravana's men capture Hanuman, and Ravana orders them to wrap Hanuman's tail in cloth and to set it on fire. With his tail burning, Hanuman hops from house-top to house-top, setting Lanka afire. He then flies back to Rama to tell him where Sita is.

9) Rama, Lakshman and the monkey army build a causeway from the tip of India to Lanka and cross over to Lanka. A might battle ensues. Rama kills several of Ravana's brothers and then  
Rama confronts ten-headed Ravana. (Ravana is known for his wisdom as well as for his weakness for women which may explain why he is pictured as very brainy.) Rama finally kills Ravana.

10). Rama frees Sita. After Sita proves here purity, they return to Ayodhya and Rama becomes king. His rule, Ram-rajya, is an ideal time when everyone does his or her dharma and "fathers never have to light the funeral pyres for their sons."

# Tuwaang

Ang **Tuwaang** ay isang epiko ng mga Manobo na ginagawa ring libangan tuwing may libing, kasal, ritwal ng pagpapasalamat para sa saganing ani, o sa isang matagumpay na pangangaso.

Ang bawat awit ng epiko ng Tuwaang ay ipinakikilala ng mang-aawit gamit ang isang tula na tinatawag ng mga Manobo na *tabbayanon*, na mayroong dalawang bahagi: ang tabbayanon na nagdudulot ng interes at kadalasang naghahayag ng pag-ibig at pangarap ng mang-aawit; at ang *bantangon*, na nagpapabatid ng simula ng pag-awit. Mayroong higit sa 50 na mga kanta ng Tuwaang, ngunit hanggang ngayon, dalawang kanta pa lamang ang nailalathala.

Ito ay ang **Mangovayt Buhong na Langit** (The Maiden of the Buhong Sky) at **Midsakop Tabpopawoy**(Tuwaang Attends a Wedding). Sa unang awit, iniligtas ni Tuwaang ang isang dilag mula sa kanyang dambuhalang manliligaw, isang lalaki mula sa Pangumanon. Gamit ang laway ni Tuwaang, napabuhay niyang muli ang mga taong pinatay ng higante. Dinala ni Tuwaang ang dilag sa kanyang bayan at doon, ay may nakasagupa na naman siyang isang katunggali. Pagkatapos, si Tuwaang at ang kanyang mamamayan ay sumakay sa isang bangka patungo sa langit.

Sa ikalawang awit, si Tuwaang ay dumalo sa isang kasalan, para lamang maging kabiyak ng babaeng ikakasal, matapos na mabigong magbigay ang lalaki mula sa Sakadna ng kabayaran para sa kasal. Natalo ni Tuwaang ang lalaki at pagkatapos ay dinala niya ang babae sa Kuaman kung saan siya ay naghari magpakailanman.

**PRAYER PROFILE**   
The Manobo of The Philippines  
A cluster profile covering 8 Manobo tribes.

The Manobo are several people groups who inhabit the island of Mindanao in the [Philippines](http://www.prayway.com/unreached/countries/philipp.html). They speak one of the languages belonging to the Manobo language family. Their origins can be traced back to the early Malay peoples, who came from the surrounding islands of Southeast Asia. Today, their common cultural language and Malay heritage help to keep them connected.

The Manobo cluster includes eight groups: the Cotabato Manobo, Agusan Manobo, Dibabawon Manobo, Matig Salug Manobo, Sarangani Manobo, Manobo of Western Bukidnon, Obo Manobo, and Tagabawa Manobo. Their populations range from less than 15,000 to more than 50,000. The groups are often connected by name with either political divisions or landforms. The Bukidnons, for example, are located in a province of the same name. The Agusans, who live near the Agusan River Valley, are named according to their location.

The eight Manobo groups are all very similar, differing only in dialect and in some aspects of culture. The distinctions have resulted from their separation.

**What are their lives like?**  
The most common lifestyle of the Manobo is one of rural agriculture. Unfortunately, their farming methods are very primitive. For example, the Bukidnon grow maize and rice as their principal crops. Some of the farmers have incorporated plowing techniques, while others have continued to use the "slash-and-burn" method. The Cotabato use a farming system called kaingin. This is a procedure in which fields are allowed to remain fallow for certain periods of time so that areas of cultivation may be shifted from place to place. This is very inefficient since many plots of land are not being used at one time.

Social life for the Manobo is patriarchal, or male-dominated. The head of the family is the husband. Polygyny (having more than one wife at a time) is common, and is allowed according to a man's wealth. However, among the Bukidnon, most marriages are monogamous. The only exception is that of the powerful *datus*, or headmen.

The political structures of the Manobo groups are all quite similar. A ruler, called a sultan, is the head of the group. Beneath him are the royal and non-royal classes. Only those people belonging to the royal classes can aspire to the throne. Those belonging to the non-royal classes are under the power and authority of the royal classes. Each class is interdependent on the others.

The political aspects of life are often integrated with the social aspects. For example, many social events, such as weddings, require political leaders. Whenever there is a negotiation for marriage, both the bride and the groom must use the local datu (headman) to make all of the arrangements.

There is a wide range in the populations of the eight Manobo groups. Many of the groups are struggling with a changing world. Outside pressures have greatly affected their respective cultures.

**What are their beliefs?**  
The religious beliefs of the Manobo are revolved around the concept that there are many unseen spirits who interfere in the lives of humans. They believe that these spirits can intrude on human activities to accomplish their desires. The spirits are also believed to have human characteristics. They are both good and evil in nature and can be evoked to both anger and pleasure.

While the religious practices of the Manobo vary slightly, there seems to be at least one common thread linking them together. Each culture believes in one "great spirit." This "great spirit" is usually viewed as the creator figure.

As the various Manobo groups have been separated, the religious beliefs of other peoples have influenced them somewhat. However, the Manobo have often incorporated these new practices into their belief system, rather than abandoning their practices and being converted to new religions.

**What are their needs?**  
The farming techniques used by many of the Manobo groups are very primitive. Inefficiency of labor hinders economic growth in their communities. There is a great need for agricultural development projects to educate them on such things as crop rotation and use of chemical fertilizers. Such training would not only enhance their efforts, but also provide open doors through which missionaries may enter.

Another need of the Manobo lies within the area of their culture. These groups speak many different languages and dialects. This has made learning to speak and write their languages very difficult for outsiders. The smaller cultures are being pressed upon by larger groups that surround them. Because of this, they fear losing their original languages and cultural idiosyncrasies. An effort must be made to preserve their original culture so that these fears will be calmed.

Spiritually, the Manobo need a Savior! They must be told that there is a loving God who longs to make them a part of His family. Who will tell them that the "great creator spirit" is really a Father who cares for them? Prayer alone has the power to break through the strongholds of spirit worship. Intercessors are needed to daily stand in the gap and pray for the salvation of these precious people.

**Prayer Points**

* Pray against the powers of darkness that are blinding the Manobo from the Truth.
* Ask the Lord to call people who are willing to go to the Philippines and share Christ with the Manobo.
* Pray that God will raise up Christian workers to live among them and teach them agricultural skills.
* Ask God to encourage and protect the small number of Manobo Christians, and equip them to minister the Gospel to their own people.
* Pray that God will raise up qualified linguists to translate the Bible into the each of their various dialects.
* Ask the Holy Spirit to soften their hearts towards Christians so that they will be receptive to the Gospel.
* Pray that God will give missions agencies strategies for effectively reaching them.
* Ask the Lord to raise up strong local churches among each of the Manobo groups.

There are several typologies and variations of manobo folklore. This is due to the fact that the "Manobo" is a generic term for the highlander populace in Mindanao. The following is the sub group of the brave tribe: Manobo-Agusan, Manobo -Surigao, Manobo-Cotabato, Manobo -Davao, Manob0-Bukidnon and among others. They have their own folklore that is very rich. That should be studied for it illustrated the richness of Philippine literature.

Read more: <http://wiki.answers.com/Q/A_story_of_manobo_folktale#ixzz27lgmNSqi>

Manobo

by: Lydia Mary De Leon

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| "Manobo" or "Manuvu" means "person" or "people"; it may also have been originally "Mansuba" from man (person or people) and suba (river), hence meaning "river people." A third derivation is from "Banobo," the name of a creek that presently flows to Pulangi River about 2 km below Cotabato City. A fourth is from "man" meaning "first, aboriginal" and "tuvu" meaning "grow, growth." Manobo " is the hispanized form.  The Manobo Belong to the original stock of proto-Philippine or proto-Austronesian people who came from South China thousands of years ago, earlier than the Ifugao and other terrace-building peoples of the northern Luzon. Ethnolinguist Richard Elkins(1966)coined the term "Proto-Manobo" to designate this stock of aboriginal non-Negritoid people of Mindanao. The first Manobo settlers lived in northern Mindanao: Camiguin, Cagayan, and some areas of Bukidnon and Misamis Oriental. Subgroups are: Agusan-Surigao, Ata, Bagobo, Banwaon, Blit, Bukidnon, Cotabato(which include the Arumanen, Kirintekan, and Livunganen), Dibabawon, Higaonon, Ilianon, Kulamanen, Manuvu, Matigsalug, Rajah Kabungsuan, Sarangani, Tboli, Tagabawa, Tigwa, Ubo, Umayamnon, and western Bukidnon. Manobo languages representative of these groups are Agusanon, Banwaon, Binukid of Mindanao, Cagayano of Cagayancillo Island, Cotabato Manobo, Dibabawon Manobo, Eatern Davao Manobo, Ilianon Manobo, Kidapawan, Kinamigin of Camiguin Island, Livunganen, Magahat, Sarangani Manobo, Southern Cotabato and Davao Manobo, Tasaday, Tagabawa, Tigwa Manobo,, Ubo of the Mt Apo region in Davao, western Bukidnon Manobo, and western Cotabato Manobo (Elkins 1966; Olson 1967).  The Manobo have for their neighbors the Talaandig of Bukidnon, the Matigsalug of the middle Davao River area, the Attaw or Jangan of the midland area which is now within the jurisdiction of Davao City, the Tahavawa and Bilaan in the south and southeast, and the Ilianon along the Pulangi river basin . This was the site of barter dealings with the Muslim traders who travelled upriver into the hinterlands. |  |
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Most Manobo inhabit the river valleys, hillsides, plateaus, and interiors of Agusan, Bukidnon, Cotabato, Davao, Misamis Oriental, and Surigao Del Sur. The whole Manobo population numbers 250,000 (NCCP-PACT 1988). The subgroup Manuvu inhabits a contiguous area along southern Bukidnon, northeastern Cotabato, and northwestern Davao. The Ilianon, Livunganen-Arumanen, and Kirintekan are in northern Cotabato. The Tigwa/Tigwahanon are concentrated in Lindagay and scattered all over the town of San Fernando, Bukidnon, close to the border of Davao Del Norte. Tigwa may have derived from guwa (scattered) or the Tigwa River, whose banks they inhabit. The Umayamnon are scattered around the town of Cabalangsan, Bukidnon, and the interiors of Agusan Del Sur. The western Bukidnon Manobo inhabit the southwestern quarter of Bukidnon province.

The different Manobo languages belong to the Philippine subfamily of the superfamily of the superfamily of languages called Austronesian (Malayo-Polynesian in the old literature). Some linguists of the Summer Institute of Linguistics have discovered that the Mindanao languages belong to a subgroup of Philippine languages which they call the proto-Manobo. The protolanguage, however, has not yet been reconstructed or dated.

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History

Oral tradition and records about the introduction of Islam into Mindanao give us a clue to the history of pre-Spanish Manobo. Their ancestors inhabited the lowervalley of the Pulangi River in central Mindanao. In the 14th century, Sharif Kabungsuan, a muslim missionary, arrived from Johore, to convert the people. According to oral tradition, the Manobo's leaders were two borthers:Tabunaway and Mumalu. They lived by a creek, Banobo , which flowed into the Mindanao River near the present site of Cotabato City. Tabunaway rejected Islam but advised his younger brother to submit to conversion. Tabunaway and his followers fled up the Pulangi River to the interior and, at a certain stop, they decided to part ways. Tabunaway and his group who went to Livungan became the Livunganen. Others became the Kirinteken, Mulitaan, Kulamanen, and Tenenenen. The Kulamanen split into the Pulangian and Metidsalug/Matigsalug. Branches of the Tenenenen were the Keretanen, Lundugbatneg, and Rangiranen. A group stayed along the river in Lanuan and built an ilian (fort) and so became the Ilianon. Those who went to divava (downriver), Became the Dibabawon, some of whom branched into the Kidapawanen. But because ali these groups retained their indigenous beliefs and practices, they retained the name of their original site, Banobo, which eventually became Manobo. On the other hand, Mamalu's descendant's became the Maguindanao.

Magellan landed in Butuan in 1521 and planted a cross at the mouth of the Agusan River to commemorate the first mass celebrated there. By 1591 Butuan had become an encomienda and tributes were collected. However, Spanish garrison towns and forts had to be erected because of Moro and Manobo resistance to colonization. In 1648, a rebellion that caused the death of many Spaniards was led by a Manobo chieftain named Dabao, a historical figure who became a hero of legends recounting his fantastic feats by a giant. Records of Christian conversion probably refer to the Visayan lowlanders, since all attempts made by the Spaniards to make Manobo conform to the pueblo or town system was futile. Christianized Manobo towns were established bye 1877, but these would shortly after be abandoned and razed to the ground bye the converted Manobo themselves, who would then flee to the mountains and revert to their old ways. By 1896, at the outbreak of the Philippine Revolution in other parts of the archipelago, the missionaries and troops had already withdrawn from the hinterlands because the Manobo constantly engaged them in warfare.

It was during the American colonial period that significant changes occurred in the Manobo way of life. Patrols of Philippine Constabulary with American officers in command aimed to put a stop to the intertribal raids and feuding among the Manobo. AT the same time, the civil government tried to persuade the people, through their datu, to live in villages instead of dispersed settlements, and to send their children to school. Consequently, more or less permanent Manobo barrios began to be established in the lower areas.

WWII hastened acculturation because lowlanders evacuated to the mountains to escape the Japanese. After the war, government homestead program encouraged families from the northern islands to settle in Mindanao. Each homesteader was offered "a farm plot of 16 acres for the first year, farming materials, a carabao, and farm implements" (Elken 1966:163). Although the Manobo themselves were offered the same privileges, their elders initially ignored the offer and, thorugh their council of datu forbade their people from cooperating. However, the younger ones, especially those who had been educated, joined the program in defiance of their elders. Furthermore, logging companies caused roads to be built in the mountains, and this facilitated interaction with the lowlanders, especially since the trucks of these companies usually offered them free rides.

A typical Manobo settlement that underwent rapid change is Barrio Salangsang of the municipality of Lebak, Cotabato. For generations, the Manobo way of life was intact here until 1950s, when it was opened to Tiruray setlers. A Protestant church was built in 1959 and an elementary public school in 1951. By 1966, out of a total of 510 households, 143 were Tiruray, all living in the village center. Out of the barrio's 11 sari-sari stores or corner shops, nine belonged to the Tiruray.

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Economy

The upland Manobo practise swidden or slash-burn farming whereas those inhabiting the valleys practise wet-rice farming. Rice culture is so central to the Manobo way of life that there are more than 60 different names for rice varieties, and all agricultural rituals center around it. In the late 190s, however many Manobo groups shifted to corn culture because of the gradual disappearance of swidden sites. Besides corn grit, other supplementary foods are sweet potatoes and cassava. In times of famine, emergency foods are unripe bananas and wild yam. Other major means of subsistence are fishing, hunting, bee hunting, and trapping. Because of these occupations, the Manobo live a seminomadic life. However, some Manobo villages that have established permanent settlements have shifted to the cultivation of coconut for copra export.

A typical village engaged in swidden farming begins the agricultural cycle in February, when rice and corn are planted. The corn is harvested in July but rice takes longer to grow and is harvested in November. During the summer, while the people are waiting to harvest these two crops, sweet potatoes and cassava are the staple food. Abaca is raised and sold to Chinese traders or their agents, who take them to the urban centers.

An occupation that figures as entertainment for the Manobo is bee hunting, the procedure for which the basis of the comic bee-hunting dance. Bees appear during the season when the tress start to bloom. The hunter waits for them along the creek banks and trails them to their hive. If he catches a bee, he ties a fluff of cotton to it and then releases it. When the bee reaches the hive, the other bees raise such a buzzing noise, that a hunter is led to the location of their hive. He builds a fire to smoke out the bees and then climbs the tree to get the empty bee hive. However, the hunter faces hazards, such as the tree catching fire or the bees attacking him.

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Political System

Manobo settlements are either dispersed or relatively compact, depending on the terrain, the agricultural system practised, and the degree of acculturation. Compact villages traditionally have three or fourdatu or timuay (chieftains), but dispersed settlements have none. Some Manobo groups did not have a fromal system of chieftainship until the present century. In 1910, the Agusanon Manobo, for example, did not have a title for chief. He was simplu a bagani (warrior) a title that he shared with other members of the bagani class. The term "datu" was used by the Visayan traders for this chief but not by the Manobo. The Spaniards called him masikampo (derived from maestre de campo) and the Moro called him kuyano/kulano. The subgroup Manuvu did not develop a datuship system until the middlle of the 20th century.

On the other hand, one western Bukidnon Manobo recounts the elaborate rites that used to be held to install the chosen datu or bai (famale datu). A great number of people would converge at a place called the center of the earth for ceremonies that involved several aspiring datu who represented four directions: the "Upstream direction" (Cotabato of the Maggindanao), : "eastward" (Davao of Matigsalug), and "westward" (Lanao Lake of the Maranao). The people of these four directions recognized a ruler, whom they chose by a common agreement called the lantung (literally, a wooden beam that functions as a divider at the center of the house).

The position of chieftainship ca be passed on to a datu's offspring, as long as the person has the qualifications necessary for the position: wisdom, knowledge of traditional lore and mythology, eloquence, skill in euphemistic language, fairness in judging or arbitrating disputes, and possession of some wealth and property that the person must be willing to share with the whole community. However, young village member who show promise can be chosen and trained to be chiefs, gradually earning the status of datu/bai as they prove their ability to settle disputes, which involves three factors: speaking, negotiating a settlement, and providing the settlement themselves.

In olden times, the datu must also have proven his bravery and leadership in battle as a bagani. The datu/ bai is traditionally also the head of a kinship group.

At the installation of the datu and bai, they are reminded to be good judges. The old datu conferring the position upon them says: "You hold the comb and oil represent the act of smoothing and disentangling and are therefore symbols of peace and order. Betel chew offering is laid out and prayers are addressed to the gods Likebeb, Mensigew, Reguwen, Unluwa, Makeyvakey, and Miyugbiyug, the spirits who guide and confer wisdom upon the datu. Gifts of money and any article such as cloth, dagger, or water buffalo are given to each datu or bai. Then a series of acts symbolizing the breaking of one's vow is performed: they break an egg, blow out a lamp, smash a cooking pot, tear down a fence, break aplate, and cut a length of rattan in two.

The datu was advised by a council of elders composed of datu and family heads. Today this council of elders may still be highly influential in choosing the village datu and the members of the barrio council, composed of the barrio captain, the captain's assistant, the councilor for education, the councilor for health and sanitation. The barrio council, which is formally elected by the village people under the influence of the council of elders, is usually composed of young educated people who are familiar with the lowland culture, especially the language of trade. Actually, however, the barrio council still defers to the authority of the council of elders, whose jurisdiction covers matters involving batasan or adat (custom law), marriage arrangements, penalty for taboo breaking, and settlement of interfamily quarrels. The barrio council handles law enforcement, matters concerning civil law, community improvement, and questions over land onwership.

In September 1959 the Bukidnon datu revived the lantung in an attempt to keep the Manobo culture intact, especially for the younger generation. A high datu was chosen to act as a mediator between the various cultural groups.

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